

# Congress must act now to put students, schools and our nation's future on solid, equitable footing.

As the leaders of more than 609 high-performing public charter schools across the country, the impacts of systemic racism and inequity are not just subjects of the nightly news—they are the lived experience of our students, teachers, staff members, and families. The pervasive, institutional racism in our country means that our students face injustices in every facet of their lives, from daycare, to healthcare to voting rights when they turn 18. The profound weight of this moment is being layered on top of the inequities revealed and exacerbated by recent COVID-19 school closures.

Of our nearly 301,944 students, 90 percent are students of color. We enroll disproportionately high levels of low-income students. These students, and their families, are the center of our work. Their lives matter. Black lives matter. We strive to achieve educational equity, and to provide every student with an education that prepares them to achieve a bright future. **Funding from the CARES Act has been a critical stopgap and stabilizing force for education. But every day, more and more vulnerable students that we serve feel the growing burden of challenges that adults should have been addressing.** But it's not too late to act:

- ★ **Increase funding for the Education Stabilization Fund** that can cover the unique costs of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding should be targeted to serve the most vulnerable students in our public schools, including both district and charter schools.
- ★ **Get students connected** and ensure they are still able to learn from a distance by providing at least \$2B for connectivity to close the remote learning and homework gap. For nearly one in five students, a lack of high-speed internet at home puts their right to a high-quality education in jeopardy.
- ★ **Triple Title I funding over the next three years** to help fill anticipated funding gaps due to reductions in state and local funding and philanthropy resulting from the negative economic impact of the pandemic, as well as address learning loss and achievement gaps exacerbated by the crisis.
- ★ **Support state and local governments** by providing funding that will fill the gaps in state and municipal budgets caused by an increase in spending needs and a reduction in tax revenues in the aftermath of COVID-19.
- ★ **Plan for the future** by creating a dedicated funding stream that will enable schools and districts to develop the ability to provide an equitable, high-quality education during and after a crisis for all students. This is especially critical for students with special needs, English language learners, students of color, low-income students, and those furthest behind.

Investing in our students will spark generational change for young learners. It will pay dividends in the economy as it opens up opportunities for multiple pathways to college and a fulfilling career. On average, college graduates earn more, vote more, volunteer more, enjoy more job security, and are healthier than people without a college degree. A college degree also increases the likelihood of intergenerational economic mobility.

**Congress, as we contend with the current health crisis and shoulder addressing systemic racism and inequity in all aspects of our society, we are calling for an investment in defining a new American standard that corrects the inequity of the past for all of our students—and our future workforce. Our strength as a nation depends on ensuring a stable educational foundation for all.**

